

Funding Equity for Non-Motorized Transportation (NMT) Infrastructure

Midland is fortunate that over many decades, city leaders have maintained and extended sidewalks such that there is hardly a place in the city not easily accessible by walking. This stands in stark contrast to many communities where sidewalks are an afterthought and pedestrians often have to walk in the street or on road shoulders. Walking in Midland is a safe and pleasant opportunity to connect with the community and get regular exercise.

For at least the past 60 years, spending on roads and streets has been nearly exclusively for automobiles, despite the fact that over 80% of that spending has come from general tax revenues (not just fuel taxes). Government subsidies for highways and parking alone amount to between 8 and 10 percent of our gross national product, the equivalent of a fuel tax of approximately \$3.50 per gallon. If this tax were to account for "soft" costs such as pollution cleanup and emergency medical treatment, it would be as high as \$9.00 per gallon. Across the US, roughly 0.5% of all transportation day trips are made by bicycle, but some cities have used their resources to develop an infrastructure and culture that encourages bicycling for transportation. Bicycle mode share in Portland, OR is over 6%, and it is approaching 4% in Minneapolis. Compared to US averages, Portland, OR residents annually drive 5,000 fewer miles & spend 175 fewer hours in cars, saving \$2,500/yr in "car costs" alone.

One component of the Midland NMT plan is designed to add designated bike routes and bike lanes to existing city streets to partly address the long history of focus totally on cars. Allocating less than 1.5% of the streets budget over the next 3-5 years will result in a best-in-class bicycle transportation/recreation network. Relative to the number of trips and the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians, federal transportation dollars are disproportionately under spent by a factor of six to eight.

National polls show majority support for increased spending on bicycle facilities, even if it means less gas taxes go to construction of new roads. A Harris Interactive poll found that 81 percent of Americans would radically change federal transportation outlays from 79 percent for roads, 20 percent for mass transit, and 1 percent for biking and walking, to 37, 41, and 22 percent, respectively.

The financial value of improved mobility, fuel savings, greenhouse gas reductions, and health care savings would amount to more than \$10 billion annually for a modest increase in non-motorized transportation (NMT). For a substantial increase, benefits would add up to more than \$65 billion every year. These benefits dwarf historic spending for bicycling and walking infrastructure: \$4.5 billion cumulative federal investment since 1992, when bicycling and walking first received federal funding.

For more information: www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm